



40 Days of Prayer
50 Days of Evangelism
a **90** Day Investment in **3000** Lives

Introduction to A 90-Day Investment in the Lives of 3000 People

By Ronnie G Collins

Chair: Holston Conference Witness Team

February 23rd, 2010

You are about to embark on an adventure with God. What will this adventure look like?

It could mean that you will pray, fast, and seek God's face and that He will lead you to people that need to know Him, people who need to be baptized, people who need to be disciplined. It may mean that at the end of these 90 days, you will have drawn closer to God through the spiritual disciplines of prayer, fasting, and the giving of your time and energy. It may mean that there will be more people in heaven someday because you took the challenge to ask God for 3000 souls that will follow Christ.

Matthew 28: 18-20

Jesus, undeterred, went right ahead and gave his charge: "God authorized and commanded me to commission you: Go out and train everyone you meet, far and near, in this way of life, marking them by baptism in the threefold name: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Then instruct them in the practice of all I have commanded you. I'll be with you as you do this, day after day after day, right up to the end of the age."

The Message

Jesus said, go and make disciples and that is just what we intend to do. In order to find them, we have to go. And in order to disciple them, we have to introduce them to Jesus Christ.

We are extending this challenge to you. Seek God in prayer and fasting in some form or fashion for 40 days, from February 23rd to April 3rd, 2010. Ask God to lead us, empower us, and embolden us as witnesses that we might see 3000 people come for baptism on Pentecost Sunday 2010, May 23rd.

Use this devotional guide to lead your prayers over the next 40 days; after this 40-day period of prayer and fasting, prepare to spend 50 intentional days seeking those who need to know Jesus the Christ.

In answer to the question you may have about why 3000, I offer the following letter written by Harry Denman in 1949.

Dear Friend:

This letter is to ask every pastor not to observe Pentecost on June 5, but to meet the conditions so that every church will have a Pentecost on that day. It can be done if we will organize our church to witness to the fact that Jesus is Christ and that he is alive and can save persons from sin and death.

Easter to Pentecost

Fifty Golden Days of Evangelism

EASTER, We celebrate the resurrection of our Lord and Redeemer. We have a living Christ. This is the beginning of evangelism. Why shouldn't every church organize visitation teams to visit one night each week during this period and secure thousands of first commitments for Christ and his church, to be received on Pentecost Sunday, June 5?

FAMILY WEEK. May 1-8, This is a splendid time to visit young families and secure their first commitment for Christ and his church and establish a Christian home. What holy days there are, Easter to Pentecost, Including Family Week!

There were One-hundred-twenty in the Upper Room. They were all filled with the Holy Ghost. Three thousand were baptized that first Pentecost. How many will be baptized in our churches on Pentecost Sunday 1949?

Let us pray and work daily that every church will have a Pentecost.

Your Friend, Harry Denman

Shepherds, May 1949

In memory of Evangelist Harry Denman, the Witness Team is presenting a challenge to all United Methodist Churches in the Holston Conference.

Easter Sunday is April 4, 2010, and Pentecost Sunday is May 23. There are 50 days between Easter and Pentecost. We are presenting the challenge to each church to organize visitation teams to visit in your community, engage people on facebook, in e-mails, to come up with your own unique ways to invite people to Christ, to church, during these 50 days.

In his book *The Unchurched Next Door*, Thom Rainer and his group conducted a scientific survey and found the following results:

- 82 percent of the unchurched are at least "somewhat likely" to attend church if they are invited.
- Eight out of 10 unchurched persons said they would come to church if they were invited.
- Only 21 percent of active churchgoers invite anyone to church in the course of a year.
- Only 2 percent of church members invite an unchurched person to church.
- Very few of the unchurched have had someone share with them how to become a Christian.
- The unchurched would like to develop a real and sincere relationship with a Christian.

“For years I have been asked how churches can grow. I have consulted with hundreds of church leaders across America, leaders who sincerely desire that their churches reach people. ‘Why aren’t we reaching people?’ I am often asked. ‘Why is our society so resistant to the gospel?’ many inquire.

“After nearly a decade of research and almost fifteen years of consulting with churches, I am becoming more and more convinced that the answers to most of these questions can be found in the mirror. Nearly 130 million people in the United States alone would come to church if they were invited. And if they came, many would hear about the Savior who offers the only way of salvation.”

Thom S. Rainer, *The Unchurched Next Door*

Please e-mail us to let us know that your church will participate in “**50 Golden Days of Evangelism 2010.**” Let us pray and work daily that each of our churches will have a Pentecost Sunday on May 23, 2010.

Enjoy the journey.

Ronnie G Collins, Chair – Holston Witness Team

If you have questions, please contact Rev. Ronnie Collins, Chair of The Holston Conference Witness Team, phone 276-728-2434 or email ronnie24317@yahoo.com.

40 Day Devotional
Prayer and Fasting
An Investment in the Lives of 3000
Holston Conference of The United Methodist Church

The following Devotions were inspired through the reading

The Prophetic Evangelist: The Living Legacy of Harry Denman

Excerpts from *Prophetic Evangelist: The Living Legacy of Harry Denman*, © 1993 Upper Room. Used with permission.

Day 1- February 23, 2010

“The desert mothers and fathers of the third century tell a story about paying attention. A novice asked the teacher, ‘Holy One, is there anything I can do to make myself closer to God?’ The elder replied, ‘As little as you can do to make the sun rise in the morning.’ The novice responded, ‘Then of what use are these spiritual disciplines of prayer?’ The teacher answered, ‘To make sure that you are awake when the sun rises.’” (Oden, 2008)

Spiritual disciplines such as prayer and fasting keep us awake.

In Matthew 6:5 Jesus says, “When you pray.”

In Matthew 6:16 Jesus says “When you fast.”

Actually earlier in Matthew 6, Jesus says “When you give.” Jesus was teaching concerning some very important spiritual disciplines in the life of the Christian. Giving, praying, and fasting.

In Jesus’ teaching, He uses the introductory word “when” as if He assumed that we as Christ followers would practice these disciplines. Jesus didn’t say *if* we give, pray, and fast, but *when*.

Take the time today to read Matthew Chapter 6 in its entirety. Pray and ask God how He would have you to seek Him in these 90 Days of Investing in the lives of 3000 people.

One of the comments that I often hear when I talk about fasting is this, “The bible says that we are to fast in secret,” and that is correct, sort of. The bible says that when you give, don’t do it with a parade to announce to people that you are giving and how much. The bible says that when you pray not to pray loudly so that others can hear how spiritual you are and don’t repeat phrases over and over again thinking that because of the repetition, you will get what you want. Then the bible says, when you fast comb your hair and wash your face so as not to show the world how wonderful you are for going without food.

In all of this, Jesus is not saying that we cannot receive an offering in church, Jesus is not saying that we cannot pray in a church service, and Jesus is not saying that when you fast it has to be done in secret with no one knowing what you are doing.

No, Jesus is saying that when you do these things, do them unto the Lord. Do them because you love Him and because you are practicing a spiritual discipline that will help you to be awake when the sun rises.

Prayer

Lord, help me to understand your words in Matthew Chapter 6 today. Help me to draw closer to you through these next 40 days. Give me understanding and revelation and guide me to someone today who needs to know You. Amen

Rev. Ronnie G. Collins

Day 2 - February 24, 2010

Harry Denman was a man of prayer. Ed Lewis, pastor in the Baltimore Conference, told about accompanying Dr. Denman to the Holy Land.

“Early in the morning Ed followed Dr. Denman to the shore of the Sea of Galilee. Dr. Denman bent down, scooped up water in his hand, and let it fall back into the lake.

Ed heard Dr. Denman pray, “Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy Name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done...through me, Lord, through me.”

(Prophetic Evangelist: The Living Legacy of Harry Denman, 1993) Charles D. Whittle

It is said that Dr. Denman would pray for every Bishop by name, and he would lump all of the District Superintendents together because there were so many of them.

Philippians 1: 3-6 (NIV)

I thank my God every time I remember you. ⁴In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy ⁵because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, ⁶being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

Today and for the remainder of these 40 days, we will pray by name for our Bishop and all of our District Superintendents. We have 904 churches in the Holston Conference, and we will pray for each of our pastor's as a group.

Bishop James Swanson

District Superintendents

Archer Coppedge, Fred Dearing, Doug Fairbanks Jr., Randall Frye, David Graves, Mike Hubble, Adam McKee, Don Nation, Mickey Rainwater, Meg Taylor, Mike Travis, and Carol Wilson

Prayer

Lord, thank you for these women and men who lead us in the Holston Conference. As Harry Denman prayed so many years ago, I pray that your will be done through me, but not only through me, through these men and women who lead us. Lord, you have brought us all together for this time, in this conference for one purpose, to lead men and women, boys and girls to the knowledge of Jesus Christ. As we lift our leaders up to You today, I ask that You fill them with Your Holy Spirit and that You give them boldness to share the Gospel as never before. Father, I pray as our leaders begin to share their faith and invite people to Christ that we will begin to share your love as well. It is our prayer that not one person who resides in the bounds of Holston Conference will miss the opportunity to be loved by You because this is Your will. Let Your will be done through me, Lord, through me.

Submitted by: Rev. Ronnie G. Collins

Day 3 - February 25, 2010

Be Perfect as God Is Perfect

Read Psalm 139:13-16

2 Corinthian~ 12:9 But he said to me “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. (NIV)

After graduating from college in 1986 with a B.A. in English, I began doing volunteer work for a Kindergarten class near my home. A few days before I was to start work, I went in and met the students and talked to them about my wheelchair. None of the students had any questions, and they were all very accepting of me right away.

Then, a few weeks later, I was helping an adorable blonde-haired boy named Anthony. All of a sudden he put down his pencil, looked up at me with his big blue eyes, and said, “Miss Betsy, just why are you in that wheelchair, anyway?” I explained to him that when I was born, there was something wrong with my back, and because of that, I wasn't able to walk. He looked at me very seriously and asked, “Did God make you like that?” I replied, “Yes, He did, Anthony.” Anthony exclaimed, “Well, He made you wrong, didn't He?” Then he picked up his pencil and went back to work, as if that settled everything.

Anthony is now a college student. What I hope he has come to learn over the years is that God is perfect, and everything He has created is perfect. I can't tell you why I was born with a birth defect. But God's Word says that I was created in His image. I sometimes get frustrated because I don't have perfect health. And, of course I'd like to have the body of a super-model. Wouldn't we all? But I know that God has a plan for my life. He has given me unique talents and abilities. No matter what my limitations are, if I put my trust in Him and allow Him to have control over my life, He can use me to do His work.

Prayer: Dear Father, thank you for creating us! We know that you have a plan for all of us. Please use our lives in service for you. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

***Prayer Focus:* THOSE LIVING WITH DISABILITIES**

Betsy Key (FUMC Hillsville)

Betsy lived with a disability that left her in a wheelchair all of her life, but she used every available tool to win people to Christ. Betsy won people to Christ through conversations on the internet. She utilized e-mail and Facebook to get the job done. Betsy was also active in door-to-door visitation when it was possible to make appointments in homes that were wheelchair accessible.

Betsy Key went to her eternal home in heaven in January of this year. If anyone had excuses not to witness and work for Christ, Betsy did, but she never used excuses.

How about you?

Submitted by: Rev Ronnie G. Collins on behalf of the late Betsy Key

Day 4 - February 26, 2010

Harry Denman would agree with Dwight L. Moody, who told one of his critics, “I like the way I am doing evangelism better than the way you are not doing it!” (*Prophetic Evangelist: The Living Legacy of Harry Denman*, 1993) Howard W. Ellis

Harry Denman was a man who blazed a trail for Christ. He spent a lifetime telling others about Jesus. Today he sits among that great cloud of witnesses in Hebrews 12 - cheering us on! I imagine he is telling us to quit sitting on our hands, to move our feet, to keep our eyes on the prize, and to run the race with perseverance. Harry never lost sight of his goal, and we are to study how he ran the race. He never stopped. He never gave up. He responded to God’s call on his life, and he spent his life sharing the love of Christ with everyone he met. Winning souls for Christ requires ACTION, and we must be a VERB for Christ. We become that VERB when we practice prayer, fasting, serving, seeking, and winning souls for Christ. We cannot do any of this without prayer first and foremost and like Epaphras in verses 5-8, Harry was one reliable worker for Christ and so are you!

Colossians 1: 3-12 (*The MESSAGE*)

³⁻⁵Our prayers for you are always spilling over into thanksgivings. We can’t quit thanking God our Father and Jesus our Messiah for you! We keep getting reports on your steady faith in Christ, our Jesus, and the love you continuously extend to all Christians. The lines of purpose in your lives never grow slack, tightly tied as they are to your future in heaven, kept taut by hope.

⁵⁻⁸The Message is as true among you today as when you first heard it. It doesn’t diminish or weaken over time. It’s the same all over the world. The Message bears fruit and gets larger and stronger, just as it has in you. From the very first day you heard and recognized the truth of what God is doing, you’ve been hungry for more. It’s as vigorous in you now as when you learned it from our friend and close associate Epaphras. He is one reliable worker for Christ! I could always depend on him. He’s the one who told us how thoroughly love had been worked into your lives by the Spirit.

⁹⁻¹²Be assured that from the first day we heard of you, we haven’t stopped praying for you, asking God to give you wise minds and spirits attuned to his will, and so acquire a thorough understanding of the ways in which God works. We pray that you’ll live well for the Master, making him proud of you as you work hard in his orchard. As you learn more and more how God works, you will learn how to do your work. We pray that you’ll have the strength to stick it out over the long haul—not the grim strength of gritting your teeth but the glory-strength God gives. It is strength that endures the unendurable and spills over into joy, thanking the Father who makes us strong enough to take part in everything bright and beautiful that he has for us.

¹³⁻¹⁴God rescued us from dead-end alleys and dark dungeons. He’s set us up in the kingdom of the Son he loves so much, the Son who got us out of the pit we were in, got rid of the sins we were doomed to keep repeating.

May your prayers today be spilling over with thanksgiving! We are no longer in the pit and our sins are gone! Now we must carry out that promise to others and continually throw out the lifeline of hope. May the strength of the Lord fill you as you put your prayers into action just as that great cloud of witnesses did who went before us. May your heart overflow with the joy that comes in knowing Christ Jesus as your Lord and Savior.

Submitted by: Donna Godwin, Lay Member Holston Conference UMC

Day 5 - February 27, 2010

“I remember Harry Denman as always warm, open, friendly. He had a view of evangelism that was anything but narrow. While he subscribed to most of the traditional methods of evangelism – including revivals and personal witness – he was open to many other methods, some new and experimental.” (*Prophetic Evangelist: The Living Legacy of Harry Denman*, 1993)

New and experimental ways of evangelism

I work with a group of teens today who have challenged every concept I have ever had concerning evangelism. They certainly want to hear about Jesus Christ, and they even desire to be part of the church of today. However, they do things differently than most in the church world have ever done them.

When it comes to communication, they do it differently. They don't talk on the phone so much anymore; they text message each other, even if they are sitting in the same room, often sitting on the same piece of furniture. I have even found myself texting with them while in the same room. It offers a degree of privacy while staying in the group.

Facebook and Myspace are two of the communication tools of choice with the teens of today and, by the way, the generation of people 50 years old and above are also coming to use these tools in huge numbers.

E-mail is passé with the youth of today; they just don't use it. Communication with the youth of today needs to be in short bites, a text message; in video format, such as Youtube; in music they can download from the web, such as itunes; in becoming their friend on sites such as Facebook, Twitter, and Myspace.

It is time that we as the church embrace the methods necessary to communicate the gospel to the youth of today, without changing the message in any way. Take the time over the next days and weeks to get to know the youth around you, in your community, in your own church, through the media of social networking sites. You may just find they are open and receptive to coming to visit your church and, better yet, they will come to know Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

Jesus taught people in many different places at different times. He taught in the synagogues, out in the open, while moving along the shore in a boat. Jesus never changed the message but he took the message to where the people were.

Luke 5: 1-3 (NLT)

One day as Jesus was preaching on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, great crowds pressed in on him to listen to the word of God. ² He noticed two empty boats at the water's edge, for the fishermen had left them and were washing their nets. ³ Stepping into one of the boats, Jesus asked Simon, its owner, to push it out into the water. So he sat in the boat and taught the crowds from there.

Lord, like Jesus, John Wesley, and Harry Denman before us, let's take the gospel to where the people are. Amen.

Submitted by: Rev. Ronnie G. Collins

Day 6 - February 28, 2010

Christ Befriended the Friendless

Scripture: John 8: 3-11

One day the scribes and Pharisees brought to Jesus a woman taken in adultery. Jesus said, "He that is without sin among you, let him cast the first stone." They who heard it, convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one; and Jesus was left with the woman. Then he asked the woman: "Where are your accusers? Has no man condemned you?" She said, "No man, Lord." And Jesus said: "Neither do I. Go and sin no more."

Religious people brought this woman to Jesus.

Not long ago a woman committed suicide. She said she had served a jail sentence, and no one would help her. Everyone turned against her. Another woman in Pennsylvania had been out of jail for a year, and no one had spoken to her.

Judas came with the mob to take Jesus to the house of the chief priest to be put on trial. He had betrayed Jesus for thirty pieces of silver. Yet Jesus called him "friend." Jesus knew that soon the men who conspired with Judas would turn against him. Judas lost his place with the disciples. He lost his place with the scribes and chief priests.

Jesus died on the cross between two thieves. Around the cross was the sneering mob, gambling soldiers, arrogant priests. One thief said to the other, "We did justly, this man unjustly. Lord, remember me." (Luke 23: 40-43) Jesus answered, "This day you shall be with me in Paradise." The thief found a friend in Jesus.

Jesus calls us friends if we do what he commands us. "I call you not servants, for the servant knows not what his Lord does." (John 15:15) Jesus said, "But I call you friends because I have imparted to you all that I have learned from my Father."

So many of your children, our Father, think they are in a friendless world. May they find in us friends to help them along life's toilsome way. Amen.

Harry Denman

(Prophetic Evangelist: The Living Legacy of Harry Denman, 1993)

Day 7 – March 01, 2010

Slow Down

Someone tells about meeting Dr. Denman at the airport in Asheville, North Carolina. “His plane was very late getting to Asheville. He was scheduled to speak at a certain time at Junaluska, so she was driving a little fast to get there. He told her he would rather be Harry Denman late than the late Harry Denman, so slow down.” (*Prophetic Evangelist: The Living Legacy of Harry Denman*, 1993) Mary Jo Harrison

Matthew 13:44 (NIV)

“The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field.”

A first-century Hebrew man walks alone on a hot afternoon, staff in hand. His shoulders are stooped, sandals covered with dirt, tunic stained with sweat. But he doesn't stop to rest. He has pressing business in the city. He veers off the road into a field, seeking a shortcut. The owner won't mind – travelers are permitted this courtesy. The field is uneven. To keep his balance he thrusts his staff into the dirt.

Thunk. The staff strikes something hard. He stops, wipes his brow, and pokes again. Thunk. Something's under there, and it's not a rock.

The weary traveler tells himself that he can't afford to linger. But his curiosity won't let him go. He jabs the ground. Something reflects a sliver of sunlight. He drops to his knees and starts digging. Five minutes later, he's uncovered it – a case fringed in gold. By the looks of it, it's been there for decades. Heart racing, he pries off the rusty lock and opens the lid. Gold coins! Jewelry! Precious stones of every color! A treasure more valuable than anything he has ever imagined. Hands shaking, the traveler inspects the coins, issued in Rome over seventy years ago. Some wealthy man must have buried the case and died suddenly, the secret of the treasure's location dying with him. There is no homestead nearby. Surely the current landowner has no clue that the treasure's here. The traveler closes the lid, buries the chest, and marks the spot. He turns around, heading home – only now he's not plodding. He's skipping like a little boy, smiling broadly.

What a find! Unbelievable! I've got to have that treasure! But I can't just take it – that would be stealing. Whoever owns the field owns what's in it. But how can I afford to buy it? I'll sell my farm...and crops...all my tools...my prize oxen. Yes, if I sell everything, that should be enough!

From the moment of his discovery, the traveler's life changes. The treasure captures his imagination, becomes the stuff of his dreams. It's his reference point, his new center of gravity. The traveler takes every new step with this treasure in mind. He experiences a radical paradigm shift. (Author Unknown)

Prayer

Lord, help us to slow down and look for the treasure in Your Word and in the lives You want us to touch during these 40 Days.

Submitted by: Rev. Ronnie G. Collins

Day 8 – March 02, 2010

Make the most of every opportunity. Is God calling you to a deeper life of prayer?

Romans 12:5

In Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.

As we participate in the 50 Golden Days of Evangelism, we emphasize the need of prayer for individuals and for the church as a whole. In so doing, my mind takes me back to an illustration that Henry Blackaby shares in the Bible study *Experiencing God, Knowing and Doing the Will of God*. On the topic of “God’s Will and the Church,” Blackaby speaks of how God uniquely equips the church so that body functions effectively as a whole. Henry Blackaby speaks of a woman in one of the former pastorates as a knee of the church body, meaning that Ivah Bates was an effective prayer warrior. Interestingly enough, it took a while for Ivah Bates to realize how God had gifted her for the body. She had tried hospital visitation, but Henry Blackaby discovered that those she visited were usually a bit depressed or downcast after her visits. Visiting with her a few times, it became obvious to Pastor Blackaby what the problem was: Ms. Bates always seemed to relate to the patient some terrible outcome of someone she knew who had had the same symptoms as the patient. Try as they did to work with Ivah and teach her better visitation conversation, she never became an effective visitor. However, the church was able to help Ivah Bates identify and utilize the gift that God had given her, and that gift was her prayer life. The church recognized the effectiveness of Ivah Bates’ prayer life.

So it became the practice of those in the church to bring to Ms. Bates any of their concerns. Even the high school and college students would bring to Ivah the names of those that they would be sharing faith with and at what times they expecting to be doing so. Here is one of those examples.

So a student named Wayne said to Ivah, “Next Tuesday I will be witnessing to Doug, would you pray for me?” Ivah agreed. She dropped everything and began to pray over the noon hour while Wayne was witnessing. She did that every time the students told her what they were doing. Only the “hand” was touching the campus, but the whole body was fitly joined together. Each part functioned where God put it, so that the hand could be effective.

About three months later, a young man came down the aisle during the invitation. He was trusting the Lord. I said to the congregation, “This is Doug. He has just become a Christian.” I looked over at Ivah and she was deeply moved and weeping. She had never met Doug, but she had prayed for him for three months.

Who won Doug to the Lord? The body did! (page 162)

During our 50 Golden Days of Evangelism, we must be a people of ardent prayer. Undoubtedly there are certain people among us who are especially gifted in this area of prayer as is illustrated in Ivah Bates’ life. Could you be such a person? Is God calling you to a deeper life of prayer? We are reminded, “*The effectual fervent prayer of the righteous man availeth much.*” *James 5:16b*

Submitted by: Rev. Ty Harrison – Sr. Pastor, First UMC, Hillsville, VA

Day 9 – March 03, 2010

Only One Message

“When all is said and done, Harry Denman really was a man with only one message, and that was the validity and vitality of evangelism as the sharing of the good news of the new life in Jesus Christ and a call to all persons to follow Christ as Lord and Savior.” (*Prophetic Evangelist: The Living Legacy of Harry Denman*, 1993) Robert F. Lundy

Matthew 9:37-38 (The Message)

³⁵⁻³⁸Then Jesus made a circuit of all the towns and villages. He taught in their meeting places, reported kingdom news, and healed their diseased bodies, healed their bruised and hurt lives. When he looked out over the crowds, his heart broke. So confused and aimless they were, like sheep with no shepherd. “What a huge harvest!” he said to his disciples. **“How few workers! On your knees and pray for harvest hands!”**

This passage of scripture reminds me of the message that our Bishops, pastors, and lay leaders send out every day. They spend countless hours teaching, preaching, visiting, and praying for people, just as Jesus did. Today’s world is not much different than then - the world is still bruised and hurt, aimless, confused, and lost. The workers truly are few, and many more workers are needed to gather in the harvest, the harvest of the lost.

As a church member, God has broken my heart over and over again for His people. He has awakened me in the middle of the night to pray for our church leaders and for the lost. When we are awakened like that, we must respond immediately and get on our knees and pray - even if it’s in the middle of the night and we have no idea what we are praying about or why. God knows. When we feel those little nudges to pray, we just need to be obedient and do it. It is urgent and time is short. God yearns for all people to come to know Him. He does not want one lost. It is our responsibility to hold our leaders up in prayer.

It takes many hands to work the fields, and our church leaders cannot do this alone. God has instilled in each of us specific gifts to use to get this work done. Let me encourage you to pray about discovering that gift and how God would have you use it to fill the call of being a “harvest hand.” Harry Denman was one of those hands, and God gave us him as a role model and he found his gift and used it well! Thank you Harry!

Submitted by: Donna Godwin, Lay Member, Holston Conference UMC

Day 10 – March 04, 2010

He gave us a task and the power to do it!

Have you ever tried to do a job without the proper tools? Imagine rewiring a house with a truckload of standard extension cords and a butter knife. Not only would the task take forever, the resulting job would certainly be hard on the eyes and extremely hazardous to occupy. It would be far better to leave the job undone than to do it so haphazardly.

That is how some folk feel about the staggering command to tell the whole world about Jesus. There is so much information to be transmitted, and there are linguistic, cultural, and philosophical barriers, among others, to overcome. We may as well admit it. It is simply not humanly possible to get this job done.

And that is true. We cannot do this job. Human beings are not naturally equipped to transmit a divine message. All we have in our pockets is a butter knife and a handful of extension cords. We cannot make the connections, and we cannot effectively carry the power.

That is why Jesus did not leave the job to us alone. He gave us the promise of the Father – the Holy Spirit of God – to come alongside us and into us so that God’s power might flow through us to do with our human hands what no human power could ever do.

Can we “Go and preach the good news to everyone in the world”? In our own power, using our own best efforts, there is not a chance on earth. But in the power of the Holy Spirit, we can fulfill this mission. More than that, not only can we – we will. Jesus said so.

Mark 16:15 (Contemporary English Version)

Then he told them: “Go and preach the good news to everyone in the world.”

Acts 1:8 (Contemporary English Version)

“But the Holy Spirit will come upon you and give you power. Then you will tell everyone about me in Jerusalem, in all Judea, in Samaria, and everywhere in the world.”

Submitted by: Rev. RuthAnne Henley

Day 11 – March 05, 2010

A Changed Person Changes Society

“At Aldersgate, John Wesley received the assurance of salvation. He knew Christ as his personal savior, and he knew that he knew it. For thirteen years he had searched for this assurance. He was a good churchman. He had daily disciplined devotional habits. He was a scholar. He had a concern for persons because we read of his humanitarian ministry. He was a missionary to the Indians in Georgia. He knew Christ was the Savior of the world. However, at Aldersgate he finally found salvation in Christ by a simple faith which he felt. This came from the heart and not from the mind.”

Wesley said, **“I submitted to be more vile,”** he preached Christ to people wherever he found them. As he wrote many times, **“I gave them Christ, I gave them Christ.”**

Spiritual Power

“I pray for those who labor for God. The Methodist Church needs preachers, missionaries, other full-time workers. God will call them if I ask. But most of all - more than financial, numerical, and organizational influence – my church needs spiritual power. I pray for this.” (*Prophetic Evangelist: The Living Legacy of Harry Denman*, 1993)

Acts 1:⁷ *He (Jesus) said to them: “It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. ⁸But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”*

Jesus calls His disciples then and now to the first priority – being witnesses to Him from our homes and to the very ends of the earth. These were the last words Jesus spoke to the disciples. This final meeting between Christ and the disciples on the Mount of Olives provided a bridge between Jesus’ earthly ministry and what He would do through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. He had told the disciples to wait in Jerusalem until they received power. The forty days of resurrection appearances were over, and here Jesus is reinforcing the Great Commission and the power to carry it out. This is a personal power that comes to us as a gift from God to carry out His purposes for our lives. It is a power to convict, convert, regenerate, comfort and keep. The nature of this power is seen in the word “dunamin” which supplies the root of English words like dynamic, dynamism, dynamo, and dynamite.

Have you felt that you lacked the knowledge of Scripture to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ to the people with whom you come in contact? Do you feel that you may be ridiculed or discounted if you were to speak of the saving faith that can only be found in Christ? Jesus calls each of us to carry out the Great Commission. Trust Him and never doubt the power of the Holy Spirit. It is this same power that raised Jesus to life in the tomb. It is the same power that turned a fearful group of disciples into men who would radically turn the world upside down. This is the spiritual power of Christ in each of us. It transformed the first disciples and has been empowering men and women to take the gospel of Christ to the lost and hurting for over 2000 years. Let us go forth and speak boldly, empowered by the Holy Spirit, of the greatest news ever given to humanity!

Prayer: Thank You, Father, for the gift of the Holy Spirit. May we be obedient to fulfill the Great Commission and allow the power of the Holy Spirit, His wonder-working power, to penetrate through our fear so we can be mighty witnesses for You. Amen.

Submitted by: Rev. Betsy King

Day 12 – March 06, 2010

Spiritual Power

“I pray for those who labor for God. The Methodist Church needs preachers, missionaries, other full-time workers. God will call them if I ask. But most of all - more than financial, numerical, and organizational influence – my church needs spiritual power. I pray for this.” (*Prophetic Evangelist: The Living Legacy of Harry Denman*, 1993)

Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil. ²**After fasting forty days and forty nights**, he was hungry. ³The tempter came to him and said, “If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread.” ⁴Jesus answered, “It is written: ‘Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.’” ⁵Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. ⁶“If you are the Son of God,” he said, “throw yourself down. For it is written: ‘He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.’” ⁷Jesus answered him, “It is also written: ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’” ⁸Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. ⁹“All this I will give you,” he said, “if you will bow down and worship me.” ¹⁰Jesus said to him, “Away from me, Satan! For it is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.’” ¹¹Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him.

Points of interest on this passage of Scripture

- **Jesus fasts 40 days as a human, just like you and me.**
- **It is apparent that fasting gave Jesus spiritual strength to battle Satan.**
- **We are made up of Spirit, soul, and body, yet we tend to place importance on taking care of the body, the soul, and then the Spirit. We have these things out of order.**

Why Fast?

Because we long for Christ to be formed in us, we make this covenant to tend the fires of our souls so that our longing for Christ may never be extinguished and that our lives will be set ablaze with his love.

Lord, as Jesus fasted and prayed, we fast and pray. In these 40 days, we are asking for the miracle Spiritual birth of 3000 people. Lord, hear our prayers.

Submitted by: Rev. Ronnie G. Collins

Day 13 – March 07, 2010

Teach with your life

“He taught with His life before He taught with His lips.” (*Prophetic Evangelist: The Living Legacy of Harry Denman*, 1993)

What would happen if, when we are insulted, we blessed the one who insulted us?

What would happen if, when someone was mean to us, we were nice in return?

What would happen if, when someone said something bad about someone else, we said something nice about that same one?

What would happen if, when someone hurt our feelings, we did something nice for them?

What would happen if, when someone did anything that isn't nice or is just outright mean, we took the time to pray for them and then forgave them?

Mark 8: 34-35 (TNIV)

Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. ³⁵ For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it.”

What would happen if we carried our cross in total obedience in these situations?

WE WOULD WIN THE WORLD!

Be an Image Bearer.

Lord, You created us in your image. Since the death and resurrection of Jesus the Christ, you have been working to restore that image. May we be ever aware that we are Jesus to a lost world. Amen.

Submitted by: Rev. Ronnie G. Collins

Day 14 – March 08, 2010

“Let us determine to know Christ better.” Written in 1950, **“Increasingly in the past fifty years we have given time to gadgets that would relieve us from drudgery only to release ourselves from the discipline of the Spirit. Today we have the gadgets. We work only half the time that we did in 1900, but our leisure has been given to the dissipation of the flesh rather than to the discipline of the spirit. Let us determine that our time will be given to the cultivation of the mind and the soul. We are rich in the material; let us become rich in the spiritual. Let us determine to know God better as our redeemer and savior and to know Him better than we know the art of recreation.”** (*Prophetic Evangelist: The Living Legacy of Harry Denman*, 1993)

Fasting in a Fast Food World

Luke 5: 33-35

One day some people said to Jesus, “John the Baptist’s disciples fast and pray regularly, and so do the disciples of the Pharisees. Why are your disciples always eating and drinking?”³⁴ Jesus responded, “Do wedding guests fast while celebrating with the groom? Of course not.³⁵ But someday the groom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast.”

According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, Americans are getting “...taller, bigger, and fatter.” [From an article by Robert Longley, About.com] All we have to do is open our eyes to recognize the truth in that statement. Seeing that trend on the streets alarms us. Seeing the trend play out in the mirror is even more unnerving.

But what are we to do? We live in an age of fast food and instant messages. We have more privacy protection and less confidence in the security of our identities. We know more about the goings on in the world around us, and less about the thoughts and feelings of our own parents, spouses, children and friends. We have so many time saving devices, and we never have a moment to spare. We are the children of the twenty-first century. We eat and run.

At the heart of the question is control. We are commanded to be stewards of our time, our calling, and our resources. When Jesus is sitting right over there at the head of the table, that commandment sounds so easy. But what about when God seems distant and our prayers sound like static in our own ears? What about those days when we run in circles and accomplish nothing, despite our best efforts, and we want to scream our frustration at God rather than lifting our praises?

Can we stand still for a moment? Can we issue a firm “No” to our urges and appetites and regain control over the lives that the Lord has so graciously given us? Can we deliberately withdraw from the stream of *business as usual* and intentionally listen for the gentle guidance of the Savior who swam against the current most of the time? Does it seem to you that the Bridegroom has left the party? Let us step away from the endless buffet line and bring our bodies under control.

Prayer: Almighty God, you hold the intricacies of the universe in the palm of your hand. You keep all things in balance. You are the source of order, and you call us to step out of chaos. Teach us to abandon the maelstrom of life and embrace the sweet simplicity of obedience. Teach us to say “No” to ourselves long enough to say “Yes!” to you. This we pray in the name of Jesus, who laid aside heaven for our souls’ sake. Amen.

Submitted by: Rev RuthAnne Henley

Day 15 – March 09, 2010

The Hour of Opportunity

“This is the hour of great evangelistic opportunity. Jesus had a worldwide program of evangelism: ‘Go ye therefore, and teach all nations.’ John Wesley had a worldwide program of evangelism: ‘the world is my parish.’” (*Prophetic Evangelist: The Living Legacy of Harry Denman*, 1993)

We can win the world; let’s start in our own community!

The truth is when we have problems, the problems are not usually as bad as we think. The problem is that when we start to have a bad day or a bad week, we get turned in on ourselves. All that we can think about is the problems that we are facing. But, I have found a sure way to get rid of that bad day, and it will surprise you. Are you ready?

The answer is: Go out and SERVE someone else who has an equal or greater need than you do. It is then you will realize that your problems are really not as bad as you thought; it will also inspire you to have a better attitude, and your problem will start to shrink.

I’m just silly enough to believe that we can change the world by focusing on the problems of others. Servant Evangelism! Now here is a novel idea.

There are lots of ways to share the Gospel with people. I just recently read where one guy would visit in homes of friends, go to the bathroom, roll the toilet paper down a ways and place a Gospel Tract in there and roll it back up. I am not kidding, he really did that and, no, it wasn’t me. He called it a **“Gospel Time Bomb.”**

I believe that almost any evangelism is Good Evangelism. I respect a person for trying, and I only ask that people not be offensive. I still believe that door-to-door will work for some people when done in the right way, through genuine love and concern for the person and their needs.

Every Christian should find ways to share the Good News of The Gospel. If you are a satisfied customer, you will certainly tell others, and I am a satisfied Christian.

I have some ideas; I actually have lots of ideas.

What about washing windshields at Wal Mart? Hand the person a card that explains you just wanted an open door to invite them to church. What about a soft drink giveaway at some local event? Give a card. What about a free coffee giveaway? What about a Mother’s Day carnation giveaway? What about oil changes for single parents? What about going door-to-door on Sunday morning with a free paper and coffee?

Prayer

Lord, help us to see the opportunities that are all around us and when we see them to act on them. Lord, help us to also create opportunities to reach out to the hurting and the lost of our communities. Amen.

Submitted by: Rev. Ronnie G. Collins

Day 16 – March 10, 2010

A Christian's Concern

“The time has come for us to sharpen our work. All our concerns and activities should have these three objectives:

To seek persons for Christ, To win persons for Christ, and To develop persons for Christ.

Christ gave His ministry to seeking, winning, and developing disciples. A Christian is one who does the same.” (*Prophetic Evangelist: The Living Legacy of Harry Denman*, 1993)

Jesus was born to a couple of teenagers who couldn't even stay with their family in Bethlehem; this may be because of the scandal of her pregnancy before their official marriage.

This is how God became one of us. This knowledge should incite passionate joy and excitement in us as followers of “The Way.” This is either the greatest thing to ever happen or the most ridiculous idea ever suggested – that God should become one of us.

Not only did Jesus' birth turn everything upside down; so did his life and what he taught. You must die to live. You must lose to gain. Weakness is strength. Joy exists in the midst of suffering. Power is restraint. Love those who persecute you. Pray for those who hate you. It is not the strong or the wealthy or not those who display their strength and or wealth who will inherit the earth, but the meek.

Jesus Christ becoming one of us caused an Uprising. If you follow Jesus, you follow the most radical man who ever existed. He stepped onto the scene with kindness, peace, and love and offers people a whole new way of looking at the world and how to live radically different. His is the most radical message you can preach or live. **He turns everything upside down and calls us to do likewise.** Jesus is committed to changing the people He comes into contact with, and He comes into contact with people through you and me.

The Uprising that Jesus' entry into the world caused isn't for the faint of heart or the middle-of-the-road, on again-off again, wishy-washy. It isn't safe. It isn't comfortable. It costs us a great deal to say yes. We take hold of the Uprising by abandoning ourselves to Jesus and letting go of everything else.

Will you choose to follow a safe Jesus who came and still lives to provide you with health, wealth, comfort, and happiness? Or will we press on to find the **Jesus of Nazareth, the most dangerous and radical man to ever walk the face of the earth?**

I want the real thing. I don't buy into the idea that Jesus came just to give us a ticket to heaven. Will you join me?

Submitted by: Rev. Ronnie G. Collins

Day 17 – March 11, 2010

“This may be the generation of which God has chosen to evangelize the world”

“We need a vision of the living Lord high and lifted up in order to see those near us. We have speed in the realm of the physical, but there are no shortcuts to the growing of a saint. It takes the daily discipline of practicing His presence. We have effected labor-saving devices until we believe we can eliminate spiritual disciplines.” (*Prophetic Evangelist: The Living Legacy of Harry Denman*, 1993)

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. (1 Peter 2:9-10)

There is a quote from the movie Superman I would like to share with you. Clark Kent’s father said this to him, “Son, you were put here for a reason, and it was not to score touchdowns.” Have you figured out your reason? We are clearly told that God has much more planned for us than the “normal way.” I, as a youth, am always being told how we are the future church, future leaders of God, we are the future. The truth is, we are now! Where does it say, “But you are chosen tomorrow”? The plans that God has in store for us aren’t down the road, but are right in front of us.

Webster’s Dictionary defines evangelism as: *the winning or revival of personal commitments to Christ*. Now most people think of speaking and preachers when they see the word evangelism, but there is so much to that word. Professing one’s faith in God can be done in so many different ways such as music, poetry, and writing. And God has chosen you to do something! The possibilities don’t stop there! Anything from missionaries to working in your small local church are ways God could use you to bring others to Him! It is unreal, the things you can do when you have been called by God! I have been blessed to get my calling to be a preacher at a very early age’ and I plan to use that to the fullest of my abilities! The impacts you can make on others lives are unnumbered with the calling God has given you.

We have all been chosen to make a difference, to change the world, to change lives. We have a responsibility to do just that. Youth should be honored by this calling a whole group has gotten. We should never let it down and never take it lightly. The power God has given us is unimaginable, and the impact as well! But just remember 1 Timothy 4:12: “Don’t let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity.” No matter you age, God can and will use you. No matter what!

Prayer: Lord, help the youth of today to change the world. Amen.

Submitted by: Evan Nester, Youth Member of “Out of the Box”

Day 18 – March 12, 2010

Jesus Must Have Persons

Scripture: Luke 6:12-16

“The day following Jesus went into Galilee and found Phillip and said to him, ‘Follow me.’” Jesus did not say, “Follow my way” or “Follow my truth” or “Follow my life,” but “Follow me.”

Philip told his neighbor Nathanael that he had found the Messiah and invited him to come see this person. When Christ invited Levi (Matthew) to follow him, this tax collector invited his friends to come and have dinner with Jesus.

In Sychar he encountered a woman who invited others to him. To accompany him to Paradise, he enlisted a thief. His ambassador that first Easter morning was Mary of Magdala. On the day of Pentecost, the mantle of the church’s leadership fell across the shoulders of Simon Peter of Galilee – a province from which no religious leader had ever come before. He wanted an apostle to the Gentiles and secured a person who had a reputation for despising Gentiles – Saul of Tarsus.

Jesus wanted witnesses. He taught, preached, healed, sang, visited, crusaded against the evils of his day, magnified children, fed the hungry, and used all methods to reach people. He loved the outcasts; he put his hands on lepers. He touched untouchables, tamed those who were wild, taught the unteachable, and loved the unlovable. He sought the unsought, saved the unsaved, cleansed the unclean.

What were Christ’s witnesses to do? You “shall be witnesses unto me” he told them (Acts 1:8). We do not witness to a church or a Sunday school class or a youth group or a program or a new world order. We witness to a person.

What a variety of persons Jesus befriended! Let it be our prayer this day, our Father, that we may find someone in need whose life will be brightened by our expression of love and concern. Amen. (*Prophetic Evangelist: The Living Legacy of Harry Denman*, 1993)

Harry Denman

Day 19 – March 13, 2010

A Few Notes on Prayer

Matthew 6:7-15 (NIV) ⁷And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. ⁸Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. ⁹”This, then, is how you should pray: ‘Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, ¹⁰your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. ¹¹Give us today our daily bread. ¹²Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. ¹³And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.’ ¹⁴For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. ¹⁵But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.

Jesus taught us to pray – Many times in the New Testament we see where Jesus went to be alone and talk to the Father. **So prayer is talking with, listening to, communicating with the Father**

Prayer is *not* a one-way conversation – it is talking *and* listening

How do we listen? Every time before reading a passage of scripture, pray for God to speak to you through the passage you are about to read. **God speaks through His Word!**

This is not so much to change God but to bring us in line with what God would have us to be like and what He would have us do.

The Bible teaches us that we are to pray continually, I Thessalonians 5:16-18, ¹⁶Be joyful always; ¹⁷**pray continually**; ¹⁸give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

I often go on prayer walks or runs – just me and the Lord. If I am driving by myself, I don't typically listen to the radio, but I pray. When I am sitting in meetings, I am in an attitude of prayer.

Prayer is about communication – say what you mean and mean what you say – you are not to pray for others to hear and be impressed with what you have to say.

The Message – “The world is full of so-called prayer warriors who are prayer-ignorant. They're full of formulas and programs and advice, peddling techniques for getting what you want from God. Don't fall for that nonsense. This is your Father you are dealing with, and he knows better than you what you need. With a God like this loving you, you can pray very simply.”

Conclusion – Jesus taught us we should pray; Jesus is our example. I Thessalonians tells us to pray continually. The words you use are not important, the communication is! Remember that God is Holy, He is our Father, not just another person. Pray for God's will; that tells me we should search Scripture to find what His will is. Ask God to meet our daily needs – No barn building, Ask for and give forgiveness.

The ACTS way of prayer:

A – Adoration, C – Confession, T – Thanksgiving, S – Supplication (praying for your needs and the needs of others)

Lord, teach us to pray. Amen.

Submitted by: Rev. Ronnie G. Collins

Day 20 – March 14, 2010

Persecution may come

“Persecution came, but they witnessed. They were stoned, but they witnessed. They were beaten, but they witnessed. They were imprisoned, but they witnessed.” (*Prophetic Evangelist: The Living Legacy of Harry Denman*, 1993)

To describe the courage and commitment of local volunteer firefighters, Jess Eagle subtitled an article he wrote, “While everyone else is running out, they’re still running in.” This bold claim marked the men and women on the crew as genuine heroes who placed their lives on the line for the sake of others. It was not about pride or professionalism. It was not about fame or amassing wealth. It was not even about some theory of life or philosophical approach. It was about knowing that there were people who needed saving and reaching them in time.

That is the basis of Christian evangelism. When we are actually convinced that our mortal house is on fire, we will do what we must to rescue those who are still in danger. They are, after all, our own family. We are one people.

As long as we are comfortable that all paths lead home, we will stand in our comfort zones and enjoy our personal religious experiences. If we can convince ourselves that the warnings of judgment are metaphorical, we can preach when it is convenient, witness when our words are well received, and hold our peace the rest of the time. But when we squarely confront the clear message of the Gospel that Christ is the solitary way to eternal life, our apathy evaporates, and we reinterpret the crowd’s resistance as cries for help.

If we suffer, we suffer. If it costs us, we will pay. There are people perishing. Let us rescue them, even if we fall along the way.

Acts 5:17-20 (Contemporary English Version)

“The high priest and all the other Sadducees who were with him became jealous. They arrested the apostles and put them in the city jail. But that night an angel from the Lord opened the doors of the jail and led the apostles out. The angel said, ‘Go to the temple and tell the people everything about this new life.’”

Submitted by: Rev. RuthAnne Henley

Day 21 – March 15, 2010

Evangelize the Evangelist

“Our supreme task will be to ‘Evangelize the Evangelist.’ We must give ourselves to evangelizing the membership of the local church. Our church members need an experience of Christ until they have a concern for every un-churched person in the community. Evangelism must not be a special effort in the local church, but it must become the main business of each church member.”

(Prophetic Evangelist: The Living Legacy of Harry Denman, 1993)

All it would take to evangelize the world in a generation would be to awaken the Church of the Twenty-first Century to the mindset of the First Century Church. In those beginning days, the followers of the Lord understood the concept of telling the story. They recognized that the mission belonged to each of them. They were not specialized or secularized. They had not mastered the fine art of hiring someone to do their witnessing for them.

We need to regain our passion. We need to hear the call again. It is not the call to ordained ministry that most effectively moves the Church forward, though we recognize that call as beautiful and essential. The call we need to hear again is the individual believer’s call to be filled with the Spirit of God to the extent that witnessing becomes natural.

Acts 1:8 does not say that when the Holy Spirit comes upon us we will be given power to witness. It says that we will be given power *and* that we will be witnesses. There is a subtle difference there, but it is a vital one. Witnessing is not what we do. A witness is who we become. It is not a job, a task or a hobby. It is personal transformation.

Imagine how the world would change if every believer engaged all the resources at their disposal to the communication of the Gospel. If we moved far beyond “giving so that others could go” to the use of every computer, cell phone, page of print, and social venue legally available to us for the purpose of the living out of the Gospel of Life. How long would it be before the last people group was reached?

Acts 1:8 (New Living Translation)

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere – in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

Submitted by: Rev. RuthAnne Henley

Day 22 – March 16, 2010

“We are trying to do as did our founder, John Wesley. He wrote many times, ‘I give them Christ.’”

(Prophetic Evangelist: The Living Legacy of Harry Denman, 1993)

I remember the first time I heard the statement “Jesus is the answer.” I was a student, and my interpretation of the statement was simple – in every test, answer Jesus. Is it a fill-in-the-blank? Write in “Jesus.” Is it multiple choice? Choose “C” – Jesus.

It sounded too simple. And it was. You see, *the word Jesus* is not the answer to every question. The answer to each of life’s challenges is that Jesus is the Word. By that I mean that the person, Jesus, embodied the truth of the ages. Jesus came among us to show us who God is, what God expects of us, and what God is willing to do to reconcile us to God’s self.

Jesus is the Christ – the anointed one – who has come to draw creation back to the Creator. All that needed doing, Jesus has done. All the power and wisdom we need for the task God has set before us is resident in Christ, who is now expressed on Earth through his body, the Church. Christ is in us. That is the answer.

How are we to win souls? How are we to plan our programs, set our goals, and order our lives individually and in community? Jesus is the answer. The Church has no other. The world needs no other.

Offer them Christ.

John 14:6-7 (New Living Translation)

Jesus told him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me. If you had really known me, you would know who my Father is. From now on, you do know him and have seen him!”

Submitted by: Rev. RuthAnne Henley

Day 23 – March 17, 2010

“Our great field of evangelism is the church itself. We must labor and pray until the church becomes a force for Christ.”

“The only way is to do as Jesus did – go to them.” (*Prophetic Evangelist: The Living Legacy of Harry Denman*, 1993)

Why do we go to church? What happens during the service that is important? What part does each person in attendance play in the transformation of a crowd of people into a congregation of Christian worshipers?

We are quick to say that we go to church to enjoy the fellowship of other believers and to engage in the corporate worship of God. Those are good and right answers – but they are not the whole story. We gather to offer our witness to one another so that we can build each other up, sharpen each other’s skills, and go out into the world as a more powerful evangelistic force than we were when we entered. In essence, the Church ministers to the Church so the Church can go into the world in the service of God.

Who ministers? Well, the Bishop appoints a pastor [or pastors]. There is a worship committee and a choir. There are worship leaders, liturgists, and acolytes. There are many ministers with highly defined roles. But that is still a very small part of the answer.

Christ ministers to God’s Church through the many members of the body of Christ. That would be you and me. That would be each of us living into the work God is doing in and through us. That would be all of us respecting and attending to each of us.

Ministering to the Church is not about going into the church building to participate in an orderly service of worship. It is about being an active part of a community of believers dedicated to refining one another’s witness to the world. To reach the world with the Gospel, we help each other go on toward perfection in love.

1 Corinthians 12:7, 29-31a

A spiritual gift is given to each of us so we can help each other ... Are we all apostles? Are we all prophets? Are we all teachers? Do we all have the power to do miracles? Do we all have the gift of healing? Do we all have the ability to speak in unknown languages? Do we all have the ability to interpret unknown languages? Of course not! So you should earnestly desire the most helpful gifts.

Submitted by: Rev. RuthAnne Henley

Day 24 – March 18, 2010

Jesus Identified Himself with People

“Christ’s gospel for all humankind does not see a Samaritan or a woman but sees a person who is trying to satisfy the things of the flesh.”

The world is full of barriers. We are grouped, categorized, and subdivided everywhere we go. From our early years, we learn to identify ourselves by comparing ourselves to others. Birth order at home, grade level at school, and level of competency in the workplace become part of our understanding of who we are. If, as adults, we are asked to describe ourselves to others we would most likely lead off with a recitation of our gender, marital status, race and occupation. We establish identity through separation.

But in Christ we are identified through unity. When we meet the Lord, we are embraced into a fellowship that transcends our individual differences. It no longer matters whether we are male or female, what color our skin happens to be, or on which side of the tracks – or the world – we were born. We are born anew as members of one holy and universal body. Each of us is of sacred worth to all of us.

Becoming one in the body of Christ does not mean losing our identities or resigning the things that make us unique. Our individual gifts are not surrendered to the whole, but are employed in making the whole body stronger and more agile in outreach to the world.

In Galatians 3:28 (New Living Translation) we read, “There is no longer Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male and female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus.”

This is the way we perceive each other in the Church. This is the way Jesus has seen us from the beginning.

What if we saw the people beyond our walls that way all the time? What if we reached past every barrier with welcoming words and works? What if we all chose to look at the world through eyes of perfect love?

John 4:7, 9-10 (New Living Translation)

“Soon a Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, ‘Please give me a drink.’ ... The woman was surprised, for Jews refuse to have anything to do with Samaritans. She said to Jesus, ‘You are a Jew, and I am a Samaritan woman. Why are you asking me for a drink?’ Jesus replied, ‘If you only knew the gift God has for you and who you are speaking to, you would ask me, and I would give you living water.’”

Submitted by: Rev. RuthAnne Henley

Day 25 – March 19, 2010

“Jesus was full of witnessing grace. He had a concern for the unconcerned. He sought the unsought. He loved the unlovely. He desired the undesirable. He was gracious to the ungracious. He wanted the unwanted.” (*Prophetic Evangelist: The Living Legacy of Harry Denman*, 1993)

Years ago I was a part of a congregation that received a designated gift in the offering plate. A small envelope filled with cash held a note directing the church leaders to arrange transportation to Sunday school for the unchurched children in our local government housing projects. The money was enough to get our church bus repaired, tagged, and on the road. The trip across town would effectively double our complement of children.

At that time I was serving as the intermediate Sunday school teacher, and I was delighted at the prospect of welcoming the new children; but one of our teachers was not as open to the idea. He worked with little boys, and he was highly upset with the idea of mixing “that sort” of children with our well-behaved, orderly boys. I remember being shocked and highly disappointed with this gentleman who had always seemed to have the church’s best interests at heart. It would be years before I would discover the root of my friend’s problem. He had never made the leap from working to build his congregation to working at building the Kingdom of God.

The gentleman’s reasons were sound. Having the disruptive boys in the room with his well-behaved group would create trouble. Discipline would be difficult with boys who had no parents present to reinforce the authority of the teachers, and the group we were extending ourselves to draw in had nothing obvious to offer to the church.

In the short-term, having the exuberant and untrained children and youth in the mix created a host of problems. Things got broken. Things went missing. There were difficult moments between children and uncomfortable confrontations with workers. But we persisted in ministry to these “undesirables” and watched for the miracle of transformation to take hold.

And take hold it did! From that group we watched three ministers rise. Another half-dozen young people became productive members of the little congregation. And the resistant teacher is among their most ardent advocates.

I have often wondered whether the anonymous donor had seen these children through the Lord’s eyes. Did that generous soul borrow Heaven’s perspective? Or was it just an act of obedience to drop that money in the plate without knowing why God had asked for the sacrifice? Either way, it was just like Jesus to look past the visible. Faith sees the unseen.

Romans 5:7-8 (New Living Translation)

⁷ Now, most people would not be willing to die for an upright person, though someone might perhaps be willing to die for a person who is especially good. ⁸ But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners.

Submitted by: Rev. RuthAnne Henley

Day 26 – March 20, 2010

The Universal Gospel

“Universal means all persons. A church that witnesses only to those who come to its sanctuary will soon be a museum or a mausoleum. The church that believes in the gospel of Christ will go to the community in which the church is located.” (*Prophetic Evangelist: The Living Legacy of Harry Denman*, 1993)

When the disciples followed Jesus through Samaria on the way from Judea to Galilee, their minds were on practical things. So, when noon came, the disciples were thinking about what most of us do at noon. They went looking for food.

Jesus *seemed* to have his mind on practical things as well. He wanted to rest, and he wanted a drink. But why did he choose to sit in this particular place and ask this particular woman to share with him the water she drew? Could it be that the Lord thirsted for something more permanent than a sip of water?

Jesus came to reconcile humankind to God. That was the mission that consumed his mind on the way to Galilee that early afternoon. And when a social outcast came to draw water at midday, the Lord was there to draft her into the mission of the Kingdom.

Why her? Because a woman who has so much to regret needs to know that someone who knows her whole story still believes in her worth. And when a woman with so much to regret feels the transforming power of forgiveness, her love for her redeemer is profound. That love will cause her to intentionally seek out and witness to the folk she hid from in shame before her transformation.

Living faith seeks to be shared. Congregations that actively share their faith in the community are drawing on rich spiritual nourishment. Those that do not are flirting with spiritual starvation and will forfeit congregational growth.

Jesus has done the first work. Generations of the faithful have carried the mission forward. But the harvest is incomplete. The Lord’s message to our generation is the same as the one he spoke to those first disciples. “Wake up and look around!” Let’s go out of our way to find the sinners outside our walls.

John 4:34-35 (New Living Translation)

Then Jesus explained: “My nourishment comes from doing the will of God, who sent me, and from finishing his work. You know the saying, ‘Four months between planting and harvest.’ But I say, wake up and look around. The fields are already ripe for harvest.”

Submitted by: Rev. RuthAnne Henley

Day 27 – March 21, 2010

“The Methodist church must have something to give. Simon Peter said to the lame beggar at the Beautiful Gate of the temple at Jerusalem, ‘I have no silver and gold, but I give you what I have.’ Peter gave them Christ.” (*Prophetic Evangelist: The Living Legacy of Harry Denman*, 1993)

I have often heard the story about a visit Thomas Aquinas made to Pope Innocent II. When he arrived in Rome, he found the Pope counting the money that had been donated to the Church. Pope Innocent remarked, “Thomas, the Church can no longer say, 'silver and gold have I none'!” Looking at the large pile of money, Thomas replied, “That is true but neither can we say, 'In the name of Jesus of Nazareth, rise up and walk'!”

By global measures, we are rich. Our resources are considerable, and when we hear of disasters or difficulties in our communities, we have systems in place to respond in tangible ways. Even with our recent economic downturn, we are generous and extremely responsive. That is something we should celebrate. But offering monetary or physical assistance will never be enough to justify our claiming the label *Church*. The Church is the body of Christ on Earth, and whatever else we offer to the world, we must offer Christ in reality and power.

When each of us, clergy and laity alike, is devoted to *following and sharing* Jesus, our approach to evangelism will be about far more than eradicating poverty and alleviating suffering. It will never be enough for us to rescue people from their earthly oppressors. There is a deeper oppression that only Christ’s power can break.

Only when we introduce Christ into the lives of others will their lives cease to stumble along. It is in his name that the lame of the world actually rise up and walk.

Acts 3:6 (New Living Translation)

But Peter said, “I don't have any silver or gold for you. But I'll give you what I have. In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, get up and walk!”

Submitted by: Rev. RuthAnne Henley

Day 28 – March 22, 2010

Every Person Is Valuable

“The universal gospel teaches that a person is valuable because God loves him or her. We are more than material; we are spiritual. We are created in the image of God.” (*Prophetic Evangelist: The Living Legacy of Harry Denman*, 1993)

How do we assign value to the human soul? Is one life worth more than another because of differences in geography, intellect, or material assets? Does experience, education, or skill enhance one’s worth? Does sin diminish it?

If we want to know the value of something – or someone – the key is to ask a collector. The price a collector is willing to pay is the best measure of value. Gold is a metal, and diamonds are rocks. Their worth is dependent on the amount people currently are willing to pay to obtain them.

So, who collects human souls?

For love of humankind, God freely gave the greatest wealth of Heaven. Entering into the suffering of our fallen state, God took on our whole debt and paid the highest price imaginable to redeem us from death. In so doing, God set the price because God is the only collector of human souls. (The only other bid on the market is from a destroyer.) The price God has set for the soul is the life Jesus Christ, God’s only Son. The worth of that life is inestimable – indeed, it is infinite.

When we shop for collectables, we trade in grades of goods. Some are in excellent condition. Some are restored. Some are damaged, and many are broken beyond repair. We pay far less for the less-than-perfect. We say they have lost their value through poor treatment or mishandling. But God paid one price for all, and that is the only measure we can rightly use to assign worth to any person.

What is the value of a human soul? A person’s worth is beyond measure because we are each so deeply loved by God.

John 3:16-17 (New Living Translation)

“For God loved the world so much that he gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. God sent his Son into the world not to judge the world, but to save the world through him.”

Submitted by: Rev. RuthAnne Henley

Day 29 – March 23, 2010

Every Person Is Searching for Life

“Do we believe that Christ can give life to everyone? We know that every person is searching for life. If we believe that, then we will go and tell that person. Do we believe that Christ can save sinners from sin and save men and women from death if they believe? Do we believe that Christ lives today?” (*Prophetic Evangelist: The Living Legacy of Harry Denman*, 1993)

For whom did Christ die?

The first answer we are inclined to give is the one that hits closest to home. Christ, we each say, died for me. My sins, my debt, my redemption – Jesus is my Savior. It is an intensely personal answer that flows from a deep love relationship.

But it is not the whole answer. While we may own our corner of the problem, we do not own the solution. Redemption was purchased for all. From the streets of middle Tennessee to the heart of Beijing, from the highest rung on the corporate ladder of Wall Street to the deepest poverty pocket in the Third World, from the desk in the Oval Office to the last bunk in the cells of Guantanamo Bay, the offer was made to all.

This universal call has gone out for two millennia and will echo in the faithful witness of every true believer until every tribe, tongue, and nation has heard. If we believe, we will tell our world. If we are not telling, it is because we do not truly believe. James told us that “...faith without works is dead.” (James 2:20) If we are not actively fulfilling our mission as a Church, our faith is at least anemic and may have passed away.

God so loved that he gave. If we believe in the love of God, we, too, will give. We will give more than our money, and more than our time. We will give ourselves, heart and soul, to the mission. We will give our voices and our behavior to the expression of the Gospel for the sake of the one who loves us all. No lesser answer to divine love will suffice.

John 3:16 (New Living Translation)

“For God loved the world so much that he gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.”

Submitted by: Rev. RuthAnne Henley

Day 30 – March 24, 2010

Blessed Assurance, Jesus Is Mine

Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. (Hebrews 11:1)

As a young child of seven, living in the small community of Woodlawn, VA, I usually spent part of each Sunday morning service asleep on my mother's ample lap. But one Sunday was a little different. The pianist for the little Forest Oak Christian Church was absent, and the minister asked if anyone from the congregation could play the piano. My parents knew that I could play a few hymns from memory, so here I go, walking hesitantly up the aisle. With one little hand, I began. One note, two notes, *What a Friend We Have in Jesus*. I'm sure the beginning notes were very soft, but as I muddled through and the voices began to join in, my confidence built. By the time I reached the end of the first line and began to play it again (I only knew 2 lines of the first verse), everyone joined in. It was great. You know, Jesus was my friend that day because I know I didn't make the music – I just touched the notes, and the Holy Spirit filled the church with a glorious sound.

I'm much older now and can even play the piano with both hands. But when I play or sing, it isn't I who is making the music. It's my friend, Jesus. So I may be singing *Hark! The Herald Angels Sing* or the entire *Mass in G* by Schubert. His Holy Spirit is still the one guiding my voice or moving my hands. And I like to think that my little attempt at the one-handed *What a Friend We Have in Jesus* sounds just as sweet to God's ear.

No matter my burdens or my cares, I have the blessed assurance that Jesus is mine. And as the song goes, "praising my Savior all the day long, this is my story, this is my song, praising my Savior all the day long." You have the assurance that He is yours as well. All you have to do is have faith – His love will be there to meet you more than half-way. You see, He's been waiting for you all along the way!

Prayer:

Dear Heavenly Father, Thank you for your steadfast love, your blessed assurance, and your faithful promise that as long as we put you first in our lives, we will be blessed and others will receive a blessing through us. For it is in the name of your Son, Jesus Christ, that we pray. Amen.

Submitted by: Carolyn Webb, Member of Holston Conference UMC

Day 31 – March 25, 2010

The World Needs Jesus

“Today men and women are hungry for bread. They are lonely. They are unwanted. They are neglected. They are sick in body, heart, mind, and soul.”

“We who believe in the gospel of Christ must have Christ’s social passion for all persons.”

(Prophetic Evangelist: The Living Legacy of Harry Denman, 1993)

I have been overwhelmed with the thought of people who may wake up one day (let’s say the day is Sunday since so many churches choose to worship then), the person gets up and says to himself or herself, “I would sure like to get on the right track. I would love to go to a place where people would welcome me, a place where people wouldn’t look at me funny. I would like to go to a place where I could hear about this man called Jesus. A place where I would not be judged by the way I look or by the way I dress.”

I want to be that place!

I know a young man who in the past year took his own life. This young man had been in church as a child on many occasions, and he had heard the Gospel and may have even made a profession of faith. He and Jesus are the only ones who can know that for sure.

This young man had a look that would cause some to look at him and walk the other way. He had tattoos and piercings, and he tended to wear clothing that made a bold statement about his life. This young man was one who in reality was wearing his pain on the outside as much as he was living his pain on the inside. At an early age, this young man lost his dad to suicide and for the next 22 years had to ask himself why. He grew up in a world that wasn’t very understanding of the pain he felt and for the most part, no one took the time to try and understand the pain in which he lived.

We have a responsibility to reach out to the people around us who do not look, dress, or smell like we do. We live in a world that is riddled with pain and suffering, and in this country much of that pain is emotional and not physical. Where do these folks go to find hope if not to us?

Look around you today; speak to that one you usually avoid. Take time to listen to who they are and what they have to say. And if you don’t know anyone like that, find someone. It’s not very difficult; just go to the local mall, to Wal Mart, or to any public setting, and you are sure to find her or him.

Matthew 25: 35-40 (NIV)

³⁵For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, ³⁶I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me. ³⁷Then the righteous will answer him, “Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? ³⁸When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? ³⁹When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?” ⁴⁰The King will reply, “I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.”

Who will go with me to welcome them into the Family of God?

Submitted by: Rev. Ronnie G Collins

Day 32 – March 26, 2010

Use All Methods of Communication

“Believers in the universal gospel must use all methods of communication. Jesus came preaching, teaching, praying, visiting, healing, calling persons, and training them to communicate the gospel.”

(Prophetic Evangelist: The Living Legacy of Harry Denman, 1993)

As I drive through the neighborhoods where I have lived for the past 44 years, I read signs like these.

“Come worship with us, we serve the one true God”

“We are a Bible Believing church”

“Free trip to heaven – details inside”

“God cares about you”

“Will your eternal home be smoking or non-smoking?”

“Accept Jesus Christ or prepare to take the heat”

“Don’t wait for the hearse to take you to church”

As I ponder these signs, I think of the best restaurants in town that need no sign to attract people. The fact is, satisfied customers will lead people to the best places to eat.

When I drive up and down the road, I seldom stop at a store because of a sign that I see telling how great they are, clean restrooms (yeah right). When I am looking for a good place to buy running shoes, I listen to others who run and go where they find the best. It is the same way with the church.

We need to be about the business of living (communicating) the Christian life. If we are making a difference in our communities, people will come to our meeting place because of satisfied customers, not because of the sign out front that many churches use as a jabbing tool.

Let’s stop trying to communicate with church signs that many times alienate people rather than causing them to visit with us. Let’s start to communicate the Gospel by the life that we live. Tell your story, the story of how God came into your heart and changed you from the inside out. When people see a changed life, they will come because of your satisfaction in Jesus Christ.

Prayer

Father, help us to realize the blessing you have poured out on us. Help us to speak kind words, to laugh with those who laugh, cry with those who cry, and in all that we do, to tell others we found life in you. May they see our satisfaction and come to your place of salvation. Amen.

Submitted by: Rev. Ronnie G. Collins

Day 33 - March 27, 2010

Listening

“Now we can never know what the Holy Spirit has for us to do unless we spend some time listening, and so I suggest that we listen.”

I remember reading a story many years ago that went like this. A man and wife were sitting on their front porch one evening, just enjoying the beauty and leisure of the moment.

The wife says to her husband, “Isn’t that the most beautiful sound you have ever heard?” She was listening to the choir practice taking place at the little church just down the road. To which the husband replied, “Yes, and isn’t it amazing, they make that sound by rubbing their hind legs together.” He was listening to the crickets.

You see, what we hear depends on what we are focused upon. If we are focused on the troubles in the world, we tend to hear only bad things. If we are focused on the blessings in the world, we tend to only hear the good things.

Who or what are you listening to today?

This would be a great time to take out your bible and read what God has to say to you today. Listen; take the time to just sit and focus.

Luke 15: 3-7 (NIV)

Then Jesus told them this parable: ⁴“Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Does he not leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? ⁵And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders ⁶and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, ‘Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.’ ⁷I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.”

What is God saying to you?

Prayer

Father, there are lost people all around us. Move us to get out there and find them, move us to leave the safety and comfort of the familiar so that heaven can rejoice. Amen.

Submitted by: Rev. Ronnie G. Collins

Day 34 – March 28, 2010

Caring and Witnessing to Those Often Forgotten

“How many invalids have we been to see? I think that one of the things we ought to do is to visit the people who are not able to come to church. We make a rather big to-do over those that do come to church, but sometimes for months we neglect the people who cannot come.” (*Prophetic Evangelist: The Living Legacy of Harry Denman*, 1993)

Matthew 25: 37-40 (TNIV)

“Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink?’³⁸ When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you?’³⁹ When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’

⁴⁰”The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’”

One of the most painful experiences in life would have to be when a person comes to the point in life when they can no longer live independently; that time when a person has to go into a care facility that, although it is a good place, is not home.

Not only do these folks have to leave the comfort of a place they have called home and their familiar surroundings, they also lose their ability to attend church as they have done so often for many years.

Why don't we do something for the least of these?

Why don't we take the church to them? Why not start a weekly Bible study in a local rest home? Why not send a church member each week to teach a Sunday school class at the place they now call home? Maybe this would even help to make this good place a great place, a place where they still find Christ.

When we do this, we will even find those for whom Christ died who have never made a commitment to Him; even at the stage in life in which they find themselves dependent on others, they can find dependence on Christ for salvation.

Prayer

Father, give us a burden for those who are the least of these. They are all around us, in facilities, often forgotten in the rush of our busy lives. Help us to enrich the lives of those who have in the past enriched the lives of so many, and help us to enrich the lives of those who have never heard or trusted in You. Help us to take action in the name of Christ. Amen.

Submitted by: Rev. Ronnie G. Collins

Day 35 – March 29, 2010

Simplicity

“I remember being so impressed to learn that most of his worldly possessions consisted of what he was wearing on his back! He had no need for material gifts.” (*Prophetic Evangelist: The Living Legacy of Harry Denman*, 1993) Kitty Mann

I was honored with the Denman Evangelism Award in 2004 by The Holston Annual Conference. When I received the award, I wanted to get my hands on everything I could find that Harry Denman had done. I was able to acquire the book *Prophetic Evangelist* from The Foundation for Evangelism. Here are a few pieces of information from the book about the ministry and simplicity of Harry Denman.

“He was an ecclesiastical statesman. His spiritual vision was always bifocal. He was at his best when telling the story of Jesus and salvation to an individual, something he managed to do every day of his mature life. Yet he always kept in mind and heart the needs and opportunities of the whole church in its wider mission. Harry Denman’s vision grew out of his conviction that it was possible, in God’s time, for the whole world to turn to our Lord. He believed that his job was to do what he could to bring that about, one person at a time.”

When Denman died, “Closing his estate was no big task, for he gave all his material possessions away throughout his life.”

“He preached to large crowds in churches, auditoriums, stadiums, and camp meetings, but he would pour out his heart and soul with equal fervor to the few gathered in a remote village or at a storefront church.” He copied the entire Bible in handwriting at least once in his lifetime. He said this discipline led him to new insights into the scriptures. Harry arose about 12:30 a.m. each morning, studied the scriptures by copying them, and prayed during the night. Harry Denman had a view of evangelism that was anything but narrow. “He set the churches on fire, and we had the greatest years in evangelism in the history of modern Methodism.”

“I remember being so impressed to learn that most of his worldly possessions consisted of what he was wearing on his back! He had no need for material gifts.”

I am honored to be a recipient of the Denman Evangelism Award, and I am again honored to be involved in challenging the people of Holston Conference to live simple lives and have nothing more important than telling others about Jesus Christ.

He never owned a watch. He had only one suit at a time. He carries his toiletries in a paper bag in his one briefcase to save space in packing.

Prayer

Lord, help us to live simple lives, to not be weighed down with the things of the world. Help us to follow Harry Denman in the simple way, but even more, help us to follow Christ. Amen.

Submitted by: Rev. Ronnie G. Collins

Day 36 – March 30, 2010

Why Don't We Do Church Outside the Box?

Hebrews 10: 24-25 (TNIV)

And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, ²⁵not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

We do typical church on Sunday morning at 11 a.m. Why?

Because we've always done it that way?

I would submit that the average person who goes to church on Sunday morning at 11 a.m. is there at that time because we have always done it that way.

I admire the folks who are “stepping outside the box” and having worship service on Saturday evenings or some other time during the week that meets the needs of a changing world. Being a pastor, I understand what it is to take on new responsibilities while never dropping old responsibilities, so I hope when we take on new worship times that we consider dropping the times that are not working anymore.

What if we started doing worship services at different times during the week? We recently had a great number of teens show up at the church at 6 a.m. to help with breakfast for an event with which we were involved. I realized then that they want to be here, but they live busy lives just as we do. Offer them a time when they can come, and they will.

We live in a time where people seldom fight over Blue Laws anymore, and if you have no idea what a Blue Law is, then you fit the category I am speaking of.

People have responsibilities like no other time in history. There are more people employed in jobs where they have to work on Sunday morning at 11 a.m. Law Enforcement, Hospitals, Convenience Stores, Hotels, Restaurants, etc. These things are realities, and we need to provide worship for those who do not have a typical 9:00-5:00 job.

We don't find prescribed meeting times in the Bible, only a prescription to meet together.

Prayer: Father, help us to step outside the boxes we have placed ourselves in. These are not boxes that you put together and said we must stay here. Lord, help us to think outside the box, then step outside the box, in faith. Amen.

Rev. Ronnie G. Collins

Day 37 – March 31, 2010

I Have Come to Call Outcasts

Matthew 9: 9-13

“I have not come to call respectable people, but outcasts.” (TEV)

When Jesus said to the tax collector, Levi, “follow me,” Levi responded and became one of the twelve disciples.

On Jesus’ way to Jerusalem, where the crucifixion awaited him, a blind beggar, sitting by the road, cried out: “Jesus, son of David, have mercy on me.” (Luke 18:35) “What do you want me to do for you?” Jesus asked. “I want to see again.” In Jericho a very rich man, an outcast because he was a Jew who collaborated with the Romans, caught Jesus’ attention: “I must stay at your house today.” Zacchaeus welcomed him with great joy.

In Jerusalem after he drove the money changers from the Temple porch, the lame, halt, and blind came for healing. The church too has a ministry to outcasts.

After Jesus spent 40 days in the wilderness fasting, he was determined to live according to the will of God. He was going to worship and serve God only. The early Christians voluntarily shared a common life. Those with resources shared with the had-nots. No one was in need. The fellowship was enriched at the table. One hundred and twenty followers of Jesus prayed for ten days and were baptized with the Holy Spirit. The new fellowship became a force. They were persecuted, but their numbers grew. On the day of Pentecost Peter told his hearers about Jesus. They asked, “What shall we do?” He replied, “Repent and be baptized ... for the forgiveness of your sins” (Acts 2:37-38), and some 3,000 were added to their number that day.

Prayer

Our Father, may we accept the obligations of disciplined living as the means by which we obtain fullness of life. Help us to resist the temptation of living only the pleasures or for thrills that have no lasting worth or value. Amen.

(Prophetic Evangelist: The Living Legacy of Harry Denman, 1993)

Harry Denman

Day 38 – April 1, 2010

Running for God

Acts 8: 26-40

Do you obey the Spirit today? Will you do what God tells you to do? He may have a running job for you. In fact, all work of the kingdom is so important that we should be runners. The only place for a sitter in the kingdom is to take time to meditate, to hear the commands and instructions of God – and then run to execute them. Let us be runners.

We read that Phillip was running. Why? He was the leader of a great spiritual awakening in Samaria. In fact, this layman, under the leadership of the Holy Spirit, was having such a great revival in Samaria that news reached First Church, Jerusalem. So it was decided to send Peter and John to see about this movement among the underprivileged Samaritans across the tracks. Thank God, First Church, Jerusalem, sent their best leaders to help.

In the midst of this wonderful spiritual outpouring “the angel of the Lord spake unto Phillip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert. And he arose and went: and, behold, a man of Ethiopia, a eunuch of great authority under Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem for to worship, was returning, and sitting in his chariot read Esaias the prophet. Then the Spirit said unto Phillip, ‘Go near, and join thyself to this chariot.’ And Phillip ran thither to him.” Phillip ran.

He ran because the errand was urgent. The opportunity to bear the gospel witness to the Ethiopian would not come again, and God had no one else to run this errand. He ran because he was under orders of the Holy Spirit. There was no higher authority for him to submit to than that.

Prayer

Help us, our Father, to look upon our opportunities to share the good news of Christ as divine calls to enlarge the kingdom of God. Give us rejoicing hearts as we proclaim thy love and goodness wherever we can bear testimony to Christ, our Lord. Amen

Harry Denman

(Prophetic Evangelist: The Living Legacy of Harry Denman, 1993)

Day 39 – April 2, 2010

Looking Forward

“We want the Methodist church to believe that it is the duty and privilege of every member to witness for Christ and the church. Methodists of yesteryear called it “personal work,” “burden for souls,” “one win one.” Perhaps we should call the idea, “Each one reach one for Christ and the church.” What great things would happen! Methodism began as a lay evangelistic movement, and it must continue to be one.” (*Prophetic Evangelist: The Living Legacy of Harry Denman*, 1993)

A Mercedes-Benz TV commercial shows one of its cars colliding with a concrete wall during a safety test. Someone then asks a Mercedes engineer why the company does not enforce its patent on their car’s energy-absorbing car body. The Mercedes’ design has been copied by almost every other car maker in the world in spite of the fact that it has an exclusive patent.

The engineer replies in a clipped German accent, “Because in life, some things are just too important not to share.”

King Duncan observes, “Some things are just too important not to share. As Christians, we believe the good news of Jesus Christ is one of those things that is too important not to share. No, that is an understatement. We believe Jesus Christ *must* be shared with our friends, our neighbors, the world. The work of sharing the news of Jesus Christ we call evangelism. The Christian faith has been advanced through the ages by people who were willing to take upon themselves the responsibility of being evangelists – those who spread the good news of Christ.” (King Duncan, *Collected Sermons*) Shared in Preaching Now.

Methodism must become an evangelistic movement again. Without our people who have been saved by grace, telling others about this awesome gift, we will die.

Jesus is too important not to share. If we believe that Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life, then we must share His story, which has become our story.

Prayer

Lord, give us a vision and a burden for the lost. Help us to understand that without Jesus Christ, the world has no hope. Keep us awake at night lest we grow cold and uncaring. Amen.

Submitted by: Rev Ronnie G. Collins

Day 40 – April 3, 2010

Mommy, I'm so thirsty. I want a drink.

Susanna Petroysan heard her daughter's pleas, but there was nothing she could do. She and four-year-old Gayaney were trapped beneath tons of collapsed concrete and steel. Beside them in the darkness lay the body of Susanna's sister-in-law, Karine, one of the 55,000 victims of the worst earthquake in the history of Soviet Armenia.

Susanna had gone to Karine's house to try on a dress. It was December 7, 1988, at 11:30 a.m. The quake hit at 11:41. She had just removed the dress and was clad in stockings and a slip when the fifth-floor apartment began to shake. Susanna grabbed her daughter but had taken only a few steps before the floor opened up and they tumbled in. Susanna, Gayaney, and Karine fell into the basement with the nine-story apartment house crumbling around them.

Mommy, I need a drink. Please give me something.

There was nothing for Susanna to give. She was trapped flat on her back. A concrete panel eighteen inches above her head and a crumpled water pipe above her shoulders kept her from standing. Feeling around in the darkness, she found a twenty-four ounce jar of blackberry jam that had fallen into the basement. She gave the entire jar to her daughter to eat. It was gone by the second day.

Mommy, I'm so thirsty.

Susanna knew she would die, but she wanted her daughter to live. She found a dress, perhaps the one she had come to try on, and made a bed for Gayaney. Though it was bitter cold, she took off her stockings and wrapped them around the child to keep her warm. The two were trapped for eight days. Because of the darkness, Susanna lost track of time. Because of the cold, she lost the feeling in her fingers and toes. Because of her inability to move, she lost hope. "I was just waiting for death."

She began to hallucinate. Her thoughts wandered. A merciful sleep occasionally freed her from the horror of her entombment, but the sleep would be brief. Something always awakened her: the cold, the hunger, or most often, the voice of her daughter.

Mommy, I'm thirsty.

At some point in that eternal night, Susanna had an idea. She remembered a television program about an explorer in the Arctic who was dying of thirst. His comrade slashed open his hand and gave his friend his blood. "I had no water, no fruit juice, no liquids. It was then I remembered I had my own blood." Her groping finger, numb from the cold, found a piece of shattered glass. She sliced open her left index finger and gave it to her daughter to suck. The drops of blood weren't enough. "Please, Mommy, some more. Cut another finger." Susanna has no idea how many times she cut herself. She only knows that if she hadn't, Gayaney would have died. Her blood was her daughter's only hope.

Prayer: Father, just like this story, it is Jesus' blood that gives us life. We live in a world of thirsty souls, looking for the water of life. You offer that life through your son Jesus Christ. Help us, your sons and daughters, to offer that life to those who thirst.

Submitted by: Rev. Ronnie G. Collins. Inspired by a true story.